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PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

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Written Testimony of
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2010

Re: **S.B. 448**, AAC Applications for Relief from Physical Abuse by a Family or Household Member
H.B. 5496, AAC Restraining Orders of the Protection of Family Violence Victims in the Workplace
H.B. 5497, AAC the Recommendations of the Speaker of the House of Representatives' Task Force on Domestic Violence

Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of the concepts raised in the above referenced bills, which would strengthen Connecticut law to protect women and families from abusers.

Nearly one in five women (19%) considers violence against women the nation's most pressing public health issue. This health issue ranked third after access to affordable, quality health care (37%) and the number of women without health insurance (26%).¹

Of those victimized by an intimate partner, 85% are women and 15% are men. In other words, women are *5 to 8 times more likely* than men to be victimized by an intimate partner.² A large percentage of women worry they or someone they know will be a victim of domestic violence: all American women – 54%; Black women – 60%; Young Women (age 18-29) – 68%.³

S.B. 448, would require applicants seeking a restraining order to include: "...an affidavit that alleges a continuous threat of present physical pain or physical injury consistent with the requirement for relief...." Under this provision, it is essential that all factors, such as psychological abuse, be considered in order to ensure that a victim is not denied protection. Psychological abuse is the willful infliction of mental or emotional anguish by threat, humiliation, or other verbal or nonverbal conduct.⁴ Some examples of psychological abuse include:⁵

- Denying the victim access to money or economic support.
- Harassing the victim at work or school.
- Threatening to injure, permanently disfigure, or kill the victim and/or loved ones.
- Damaging the victim's property.

¹ YWCA Survey Report, *What Women Want: a National Survey of Priorities and Concerns*, December 2008

² Lawrence A. Greenfeld et al. (1998). *Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Factbook. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice. NCJ # 167237.

³ YWCA Survey Report, *What Women Want: a National Survey of Priorities and Concerns*, December 2008

⁴ National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse <<http://www.preventelderabuse.org/elderabuse/psychological.html>>

⁵ National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Fact Sheet: Psychological Abuse <<http://www.ncadv.org/files/PsychologicalAbuse.pdf>>

- Preventing the victim from eating, sleeping, or leaving her place of residence.
- Threatening or physically abusing the family pet.

Across Connecticut, domestic violence invades the public and private lives of women, men, and children, impacting families, friends, co-workers, and communities. Domestic violence crosses all socioeconomic and cultural boundaries. Violence occurs in families for whom money is not an issue and for those who have lived in poverty their entire lives. Violence is reported across all ethnic and racial groups. Domestic violence respects no barriers related to age, social status, abilities, sexual preference or religion. The human costs of domestic violence are devastating for individual victims, their children, and their families.⁶

PCSW supports the efforts to make this state safe for women, and we look forward to working with you to do so. Thank you for your consideration.

⁶ CCADV: Impact of Domestic Violence